

## Message Text

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ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 IO-13 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-01  
INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02  
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INFO AMEMBASSY AMMAN  
AMEMBASSY CAIRO  
AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS  
AMEMBASSY JIDDA  
AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV  
USMISSION USUN NEW YORK

C O N F I D E N T I A L JERUSALEM 0815

E.O. 11652: GDS  
TAGS: PBOR, PINS, SHUM, IS, JO  
SUBJ: NABLUS COUNCILMAN PLOTS RESISTANCE STRATEGY

REF: STATE 122496

1. SUMMARY: NABLUS ACTIVIST ABU GHAZALAH BELIEVES  
WEST BANK PALESTINIAN CAN EXPLOIT THE ANTICIPATED  
CRACKDOWN BY A LIKUD GOVERNMENT TO TURN WORLD PUBLIC  
OPINION AGAINST THE ISRAELI OCCUPATION. WEST BANK  
WILL SEND A MESSAGE TO THE PLO TO LEAVE "TERRORISTS"  
TO THE ISRAELIS. TRUST IN FAHD, SADAT AND  
CARTER. END SUMMARY.

2. PER REFTTEL, WE HAVE DISCUSSED THE QUESTION OF  
HOW WEST BANKERS ARE LIKELY TO REACT TO CHANGE IN  
THE ISRAELI GOVERNMENT WITH DR. HATIM ABU GHAZALAH,  
A NABLUS CITY COUNCILMAN AND SELF-PROCLAIMED PLO  
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SUPPORTER. DR. ABU GHAZALAH HAS PARTICULARLY GOOD  
CONTACTS AND INFLUENCE WITH STUDENTS AND WORKERS  
MANY OF WHOM HE TREATS GRATIS MEDICALLY.

3. PLEASED WITH THE LIKUD VICTORY, ABU GHAZALAH  
BELIEVES THE WEST BANK CAN EXPECT A MUCH HEAVIER  
HAND IN THE FUTURE WHICH WILL JOLT THE PALESTINIANS

OUT OF THEIR PASSIVITY. UNDER LABOR, THE WEST BANK WAS BEING SWALLOWED ECONOMICALLY, POLITICALLY AND TERRITORIALLY IN SMALL MOUTHFULS WHILE THE PALESTINIANS WERE LULLED TO SLEEP WITH FULL STOMACHS AND WORLD PUBLIC OPINION REMAINED INDIFFERENT TO THE "BENIGN OCCUPATION.." WITH BEGIN'S ELECTION, ABU GHAZALAH THINKS WORLD ATTENTION WILL BE SO KEEN THAT "WHEN A WEST BANK ARAB CHILD'S ARM IS SCRATCHED, THE WHOLE WORLD WILL KNOW."

4. TO EXPLOIT THIS SITUATION, ABU GHAZALAH THINKS THE ARABS MUST RESPOND WITH A NON-VIOLENT INFORMATION CAMPAIGN. HE FAVORS CLOSE CONTACTS WITH THE INTERNATIONAL PRESS AND CONSULATES AND IS CONSIDERING THE IDEA OF FORMING A LOCAL HUMAN RIGHTS LEAGUE TO PUBLICIZE VIOLATIONS OF HUMAN RIGHTS ON THE WEST BANK.

5. AT THIS STAGE, ABU GHAZALAH BELIEVES ARMED RESISTANCE WOULD BE COUNTER-PRODUCTIVE. BETTER TO LET THE ISRAELIS SEEM TO BE THE EXTREMISTS. ABU GHAZALAH LET PASS AN OPPORTUNITY TO COMMENT ON WHAT INSTRUCTIONS, IF ANY, THE PLO HAS SENT TO THE WEST BANK. HOWEVER, HE INSISTED THAT THE WEST BANK WOULD COUNSEL THE PLO NOT TO STRESS ARMED GUERRILLA OPERATIONS AND, IF UNDERTAKEN, TO DIRECT THEM SOLELY AGAINST MILITARY TARGETS.

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6. ASKED WHETHER INCREASED DEPORTATIONS MIGHT DAMPEN THE WEST BANK'S COMBATIVE SPIRIT, ABU GHAZALAH SAID EXPERIENCE HAS SHOWN THAT THOSE WHO REPLACE THE DEPARTED LEADERS ARE YET MORE UNCOMPROMISING.

7. ABU GHAZALAH WAS ENTHUSIASTIC ABOUT PRESIDENT CARTER AND COMPARED HIM TO LINCOLN AND KENNEDY. AMONG ARAB LEADERS, THE PALESTINIANS HAD MOST CONFIDENCE IN FAHD, THEN SADAT, LEAST ALL ASSAD, HE SAID. ASKED WHAT THE AMERICANS COULD EXPECT FROM THE PLO NOW THAT PRESIDENT CARTER HAD FINESSED MOST OF THEIR OBJECTIONS TO RESOLUTION 242, ABU GHAZALAH WAVERED AND TALKED OF THE PROBLEMS OF MAKING PUBLIC STATEMENTS. WHEN PRESSED, HE SAID HE THOUGH FAHD, SUBSEQUENT TO THIS CONVERSATION WITH CARTER, MIGHT MAKE THE PLO AN OFFER IT COULD NOT REFUSE.

8. AT THE CONVERSATION'S END, ABU GHAZALAH VOLUNTEERED THAT HE WAS UNEASY ABOUT THE ACTIVITIES

OF WEST BANK COMMUNISTS PRIMARILY AMONG THE YOUTH. HE IMPLIED THAT THEY WERE NOT TRUE PALESTINIAN NATIONALISTS, BUT COOPERATED ONLY WHEN THEIR WEAKNESS COMPELLED THEM TO DO SO. HE SAID HE WISHED THE U.S. COULD OPEN AN AMERICAN UNIVERSITY IN NABLUS AS A COUNTER INFLUENCE. AS A MORE IMMEDIATE POSSIBILITY, CONGEN OFFICER SUGGESTED CULTURAL COOPERATION BETWEEN LOCAL INSTITUTIONS AND THE U.S. AN IDEA WHICH ABU GHAZALAH RECEIVED ENTHUSIASTICALLY.

9. COMMENT: AFTER HIS SECOND PLACE FINISH IN THE 1976 MUNICIPAL ELECTION, THERE IS NO DOUBT ABOUT ABU GHAZALAH'S POPULARITY IN NABLUS. IT IS MUCH HARDER TO ASSESS HOW MUCH INFLUENCE HE, OR ANY WEST BANKER, HAS WITH THE PLO. CLEARLY HE DOES NOT INTEND THAT DEMONSTRATIONS CEASE, CONFIDENTIAL

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RATHER THAT THE WEST BANKERS NOT GIVE THE IDF LEGITIMATE CAUSE TO RESORT TO FORCE. COMMUNISTS OR PRO-COMMUNISTS OCCUPY THREE OUT OF 10 COUNCIL SEATS IN NABLUS, AND THEY ARE REPUTED TO BE MOST ACTIVE. JUDGING FROM HIS LIBRARY WHICH INCLUDES ARABIC TRANSLATIONS OF MARX, ENGELS AND LENIN (AS WELL AS AN ENGLISH EDITION OF WEIZMAN'S TRAIL AND ERROR), ABU GHAZALAH IS NOT UNFAMILIAR WITH MARXISM. WHETHER HE REVEALS HIS TRUE SYMPATHIES TO AN AMERICAN VICE CONSUL IS AN OPEN QUESTION, BUT HIS DESIRE TO OPEN THE DOOR IN NABLUS TO AN AMERICAN INFLUENCE SEEMS SINCERE. NEWLIN

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